

Hurricane Harvey Response 2017 - Community Liaison (CL) Report

TO: Janetta Coates and Mitty Mohon

FROM: David Bryan/Jeremy Ford/Devin Pollock/Jim Stevens

SUBJECT: Hurricane Harvey Response 2017

COUNTY: Jasper and Newton Counties

DATE: 9/20/17

SUMMARY:

Again One Team Jasper/Newton member was sited at the Deweyville Disaster Response Center today. More than 60 people came to the center and 30 of them talked with EPA representative about mold, indoor air quality, safety equipment and more. Several were sleeping in homes that were being scoured for mold and I cautioned against that practice. EPA worked hand-in-hand with the Mitigation Specialist who was also talking about housing and flood insurance. Both were able to discuss issues and by midday had adapted to a collaborative presentation.

The remaining Team Jasper/Newton members were supposed to serve at the new Disaster Response Center in Newton but were turned away rather sharply by the FEMA Coordinator at the Jasper County Courthouse Annex. Previous conversations to jointly man a table with the Jasper-Newton Health Department were implemented instead with the environmental health official providing EPA/FEMA handouts to citizens. The county health officials will continue to work from the DRC going forward.

The team also brainstormed ideas related to handing over the counties to those who will be replacing us. Team will work with Mitty (Co-Lead) on providing a seamless transition. As part of this effort, the team made good use of their time by going to Hemphill in Sabine County and talked with county officials about the impact of the flood. The team will travel to San Jacinto and Tyler counties to develop a profile of those counties and the impact Hurricane Harvey had on residents.

The team also was asked by Newton County Precinct Commissioner Gary Formby if we had heard anything about possible community assistance on infrastructure. Roads, bridges and infrastructure continues to be a concern in both counties with many of the roads that are normally used for school bus routes in need of drastic repair after being washed out by extensive flooding. Temporary fixes still provide safety concerns, especially when washed out roads have holes that require 10-15 dump trucks of rock to make them passable. As part of our transition, it would be prudent if we were able to give him a direct FEMA contact but will also make arrangements for a community liaison or Co-Lead to be available to discuss this issue and ensure it gets elevated.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

The Health Department still would like any information regarding private **aerobic treatment systems**. It is my understanding that Robert Houston in Region 6 was probably the appropriate contact. The systems we are talking about are private systems on private property. They have questions regarding how to decontaminate systems that failed during the storm and flooding. The question is whether EPA or TCEQ have documents explaining how to get the aerobic systems up and running properly after they were contaminated by flood water.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- Debris is still piled along the streets and roads throughout both counties. We have not heard confirmation on whether a contract has been let by the counties to pick up debris. It also does not appear that debris is being segregated from building and construction debris.
- Questions remain regarding hazardous waste being reported throughout the county that needs to be investigated, possibly by EPA CLs.

TEAM CONCERNS

- It should again be emphasized that EPA should work collaboratively to assist the people and communities impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Emphasizing a kind, common-sense approach to assistance shows that responding agencies are working totally in citizen's best interest.
- Operational acuity is absolutely necessary in working effectively to provide assistance in times of trouble. Situational awareness allows resources to be used efficiently while also meeting the community needs in partnership with other agencies.
- Old-fashioned paper road maps have proved necessary in rural areas where there is little, sporadic or no wireless cell phone coverage.
- Team Jasper/Newton will be demobilizing end-of-day Friday and leaving on a jet plane Saturday morning. Plans are to put together information on Jasper, Newton, Sabine, Tyler and San Jacinto counties that can be useful for EPA Community Liaison teams going forward.

As always, thanks for listening and your possible attention to these issues.

David, Jim, Jeremy and Devin